

City of Mesa



Building Safety Division Strategic Plan 2004-2006



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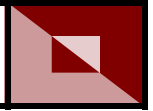
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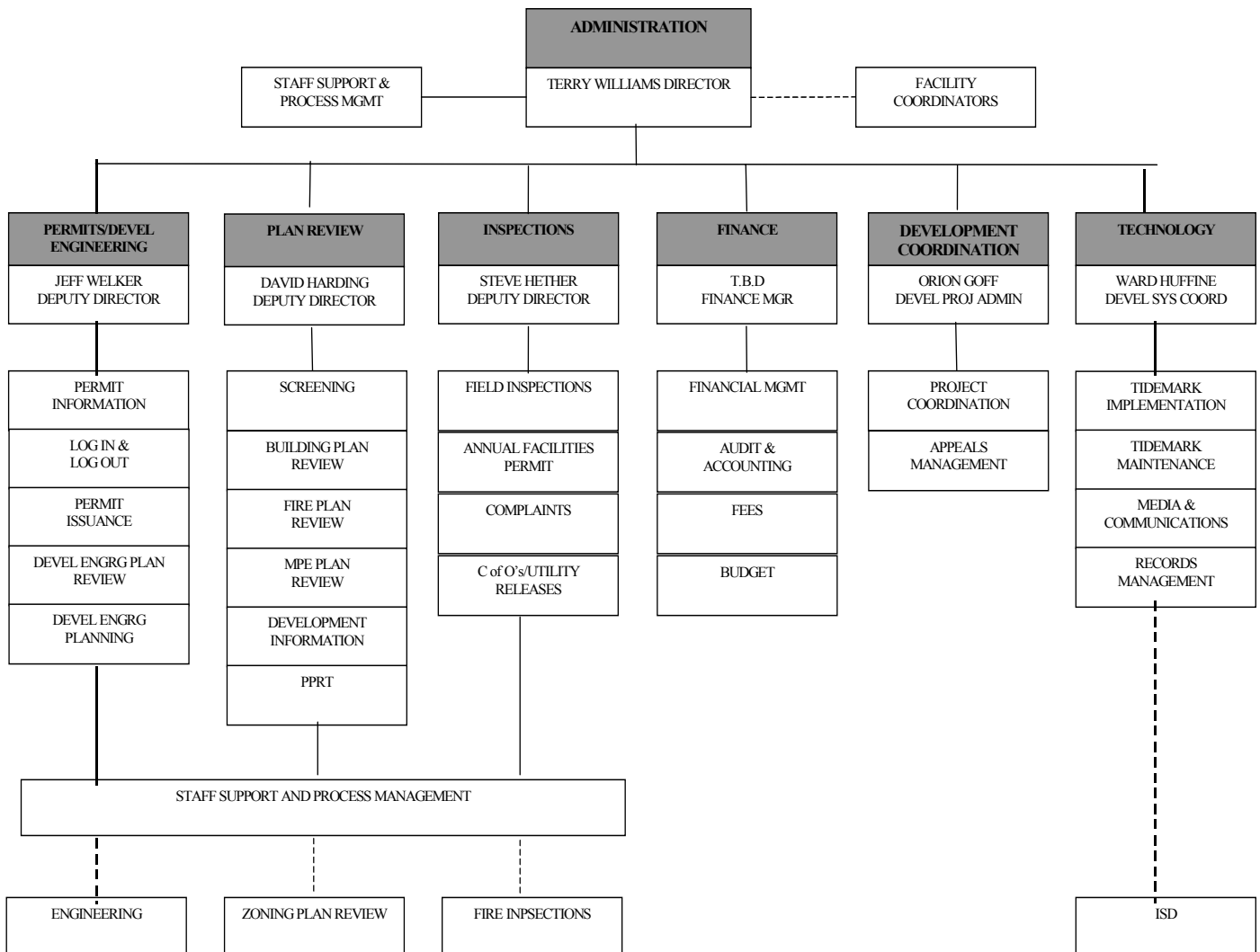
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Building Safety Organizational Structure





Introduction

Introduction:

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to analyze the current status of the working environment of the Building Safety Division (BSD) and to establish a listing of goals and objectives that will provide direction for improving the Division over the next three years. The process used to develop this Plan included using two groups of employees to create, discuss and reach consensus on issues and elements of the Plan. One group consisted of senior management, including Deputy Directors and Management Assistants that, in conjunction with the Director, comprise the BSD Management Team. The other group was made up entirely of front line employees, those that daily interface directly with the public and development industry, including Permit Technicians, Plan Examiners and field Inspectors.

The Building Safety Division is charged with the administration and enforcement of the Building and related Codes of the City of Mesa. The Division reviews applications and drawings submitted for permits, provides code information, issues permits and performs field inspections on all types of construction within the City limits.

Vision Statement:

We desire to be the most effective, efficient, customer-oriented, service-based building safety organization in the southwest.

Mission:

Building Safety partners with our customers to ensure community standards, provide information, and enhance safety as a means to our customers' desired end – the successful development and use of the built environment.

Critical Issue Analysis – Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats, and Trends (SWOTT)

One purpose of a strategic plan is to identify actions that the organization commits to take in order to overcome those factors that hinder, or take advantage of those factors that will help the organization meet its mission. Obviously then, the factors that will hinder or help in meeting the mission must be first identified. These factors are divided into four categories, the strengths and weaknesses that are internal to the Division, and the opportunities and threats that arise external to the Division. Strengths are those aspects of the Division that can be leveraged to take advantage of opportunities and respond to external threats. Weaknesses are those aspects of the Division that hinders the Division from accomplishing its mission or dealing with emerging threats.

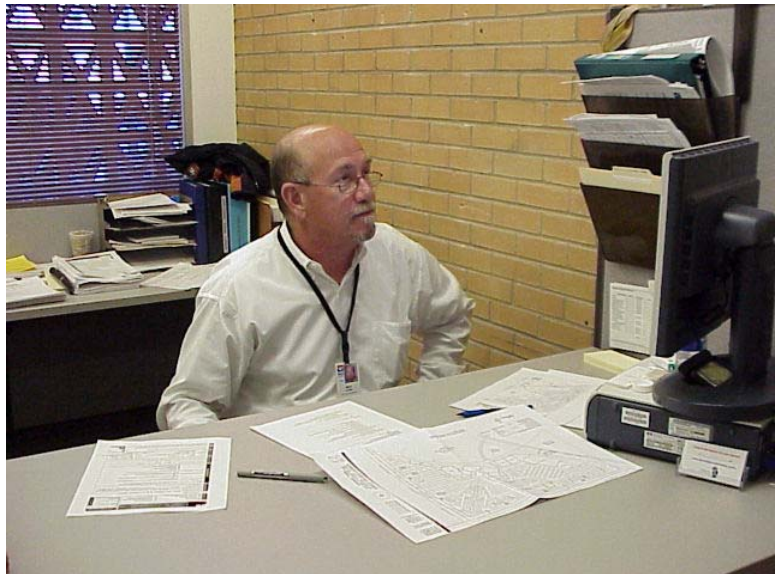
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Internal Factors:

Strengths

Quality Staff: Division staff is customer focused, dedicated, professional, and exceptionally talented. They have remained current with certification training, and employee development training has been available. Staff is extremely knowledgeable and offer great potential for continual growth.



Land Development Work Plan: In June, 2002, at the request of COM Mayor Hawker, the Division entered into discussion with three City Council members (Rex Griswold, Kyle Jones and Claudia Walters) to establish key areas needing improvement. The Plan that resulted consists of 45 improvements that the Division is undertaking or has completed. This Plan became the springboard for the formally developed Strategic Plan.



Computer Automation: Many of the challenges facing the Division stemmed from an antiquated, paper driven process, incapable of managing high volume effectively. However, City Council supported acquisition of computer software and equipment to automate the Division's core tasks. These systems were recently installed and brought into production. Continued refinement and development of these capabilities offer potential for dramatic improvements in the speed and quality of services provided.

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Weaknesses

Internal Turmoil: The Division has experienced substantial change over an extended period of time. Personnel disputes and actions raised anxiety levels in the past, and negatively impacted operations. External pressures to respond quickly to resolve customer complaints with the Division, combined with workload, also affected employee morale. Some staff have been reluctant to speak up, voluntarily suggest improvements, or participate beyond minimum job requirements.

Communication: Some staff perceives that at times they are left out of the communication loop. Changes have been implemented to respond to urgent needs without notification. Employees at times have received conflicting directions from different leaders or the same leader. Some managers have been perceived as autocratic, unapproachable, and not encouraging employee participation or innovation.

Lack of Common Vision: At times, some staff feels torn between the competing pressures of developer needs, Code enforcement, political pressures, and a professional desire to provide public safety for Mesa residents. Differences in individual employee priorities have led to conflict among staff, with customers, and political authorities.

Staffing and Workload: While efforts have been made to dramatically shorten the turnaround time and improve the quality of plan review, budgetary pressures have reduced or limited the number of staff. Increasing workload has negatively impacted employee morale and turnover.

Lack of Written Procedures: Due to the rapid growth in Mesa's population, the Division has changed from a small town, informal organization, to a fast paced, high volume, and exacting regulatory organization. The historic absence of detailed, written procedures led to inconsistent service, errors, customer complaints, and diminished productivity. Implementation of operational changes has, at times, appeared to be knee-jerk reactions, without ample time, notification or staff training.

Out of Date Building Codes and Public Works Standards and Procedures: Formal City adoption of building codes has not kept pace with other communities within Arizona or nationally. This caused difficulties for customers and negatively impacted operations.

Decentralized Data: Much of the data and information needed by the Division to provide its services are located in several paper file cabinets distributed throughout the organization. Tracking down needed information causes delays and limits productivity.

Aging and Insufficient Facilities: Current facilities are crowded for both employees and customers. Some employees are physically separated in different buildings or even within the same building, which affects productivity. The phone system restricts customer access and is not customer friendly.

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External Factors:

Opportunities

Computer Automation and Technology: The development community and industry at large is growing more dependent on computer technology and electronic construction documents. Developing the ability to review plans electronically, ultimately moving toward a near paperless process, offers potential for still another dramatic improvement in providing service.



Council Support: The Division came under City Council scrutiny because of developer concerns about speed and quality of services. This interest has been met openly, encouraging Council's involvement. As performance has improved over the past months, the Division has earned Council support.

Partnerships and Recent Goodwill: The Division has developed a positive, professional relationship with the development community. Communication and partnerships have increased, resulting in better service and internal operations. This goodwill presents an opportunity to better meet customer needs and enhance cooperation.

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External Factors:

Threats

Continued Submission of Poor Quality Construction Plans and Documents: Despite past efforts to work with applicants, a substantial number of construction documents are submitted to the Division that are of relatively poor quality. The frequency at which any given set of plans contains multiple errors or omissions in compliance with Code increases the risk that Division staff may miss an important item.

Some Developers Attempt to Apply Political Pressure or Sidestep Compliance Issues: Some customers want or expect special treatment to waive compliance requirements. Some will fully attempt to take shortcuts during planning or construction, to try to restrict costs or shorten project times. Some also possess a negative image of government as being unnecessarily controlling and untrustworthy. Such efforts only serve to increase the Division's workload and affect productivity.

Declining Revenues: The recent national economic decline affects the financial resources available to the Division in several ways. Slower construction results in fewer fees collected. Fewer tax dollars results in fewer general fund dollars budgeted to the Division. The economy places pressure on the Council and developers to hold fee increases down, while Mesa's development fees are among the lowest in the area.

Increasing Service Demand and Expectations: Not only is the volume of applications increasing in proportion to the number of staff, but also expectations continue to increase. Customers expect faster turnaround, new services, and more personalized service. Such demands strain the Division's ability to keep pace in meeting the growing needs.



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External Factors:

Trends

Increasing Service Demands In the Face of Constant or Declining Budget Dollars: Mesa's population will likely continue to grow at a high rate until build-out is reached in several years. However, revenue will likely not increase to keep pace with service demands. Revenue will likely remain constant or grow slightly. Competition for limited City funds may increase. Fees will likely increase, but at a slow rate due to customer resistance.



Economics of the Development Industry Places Increasing Pressure on Developers: The recent downturn in the economy and competition has placed increasing demands on developers to maintain profits in light of narrowing margins. This trend will likely continue.

Increasing Use of Electronic Documents: All industries are moving toward electronic documents and eventually, construction plans will be submitted on-line. A trend toward continued automation and reliance on the internet by the development community will likely continue.



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Key Result Area 1: Employee Recruitment, Development, and Retention

Vision of the Future

A well-trained, educated and experienced staff is essential to achieving our vision. An on-going evolving training program ensures that. Equal emphasis upon customer service rounds out a balanced employee who has the skills to meet the changing circumstances of the development community. Preparation breeds confidence and confidence in yourself and your organization bolsters morale. A continuously focused commitment to morale issues by all keeps it in the forefront of our thinking and results in a positively charged atmosphere. Our training makes it possible to demand the best qualified people for all positions and often leads us toward promotion from within. Training, good morale, a customer focused approach and internal advancement all demand teamwork and are in turn possible because of it. As Benjamin Franklin said of the constitutional framers, we must all hang together or we will all hang together.



Goal 1.1: Develop highly skilled, experienced, motivated, and dedicated employees. (High Priority)

Vision – A solid, long term, well-trained staff provides the ability to be flexible, customer oriented and able to adapt to changing circumstances. A fully developed professional development program includes staff taught classes, certification preparation and management training on issues specific to BSD.

- Objective 1.** By 6/04, develop a program that utilizes process management flow-charting and work instructions for the internal training of existing and new staff. (Three Deputy Directors)
- Objective 2.** By 6/04, develop a comprehensive and professional development program for each work group within the Division. (Supervisory group)
- Objective 3.** By 1/05, provide “hands on” training for all staff members and track achievement of “core competencies” for all positions. (Supervisory group with MAs)
- Objective 4.** By 1/05, expand the existing employee recognition program to acknowledge professional development. (MAs)

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Key Result Area 1: Employee Recruitment, Development, and Retention

Goal 1.2: Achieve and maintain a high level of employee morale. (Moderate Priority)

Vision - Morale, an issue seen as essential to maintain, is consistently high as staff sees their future directly correlated with their participation and management sees Division success directly correlated with that participation. A positive atmosphere is achieved by all Division employees' continued attention and commitment.

- Objective 1.** Yearly reviews in Dec. 2004 - 2006, evaluate the effects of the Strategic Plan and its implementation on morale. (Strategic Planning team)
- Objective 2.** By 12/04, develop standards of reasonable workload for each position. (Supervisors)
- Objective 3.** By 12/03, establish a regular cycle of review and evaluation for all position descriptions and include staff input. (Process Management team)



Goal 1.3: Hire or promote the best-qualified persons to fill vacant positions. (Moderate Priority)

Vision - All positions are kept filled by the best-qualified individuals. Positions are filled via outside recruitment, internal promotional opportunities and criteria based promotions. It will be a logical progression by Division staff to advance within the organization as a result of work experience, a highly developed professional development program and an appreciation of the goals of the Division.

- Objective 1.** By 1/04, develop and agree upon a philosophy in regards to promotion vs. open recruitment. (Director & Management team)
- Objective 2.** By 1/05, Supervisors will review each career path goal with employee and identify the support the Division can provide to realize the goal (Management & Supervisors)
- Objective 3.** By 1/05, supervision will review each career path goal with the employee and identify the support the Division can provide to realize the goal. (Supervisors)
- Objective 4.** By 12/03, determine which vacant positions need to be filled to relieve the biggest "bottle necks" in the Development Process. (Completed)

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Key Result Area 2: Leadership

Vision of The Future

Managers are trained in management practices as a requirement for advancement; past performance does not ensure good management ability. Managers do not manage in a vacuum but are helped by staff teams who are empowered and feel free to engage in an active exchange of ideas without fear of reprisal. This promotes an acceptance by all of a flat organization where power is distributed across all lines and is reflected in our policies and procedures. This has been a challenging accomplishment and has been possible only upon a foundation of trust and honesty.

Goal 2.1: Extend decision making to appropriate levels of the organization. (High Priority)

Vision - To constantly reinforce teamwork, we are organized into teams that address the important issues we face. These teams are powerful in that they make recommendations that are taken seriously and cannot be turned aside without a compelling argument. The power to influence is the heart of this. Managers are empowered in that when they carry such recommendations up the line they represent them as the consensus of the organization (not the idea of one).

Objective 1. By 9/04, ensure that all policies are in written format and available to all staff. (Management team)

Objective 2. By 1/06, develop a philosophy defining effective decision-making and provide staff with decision-making training. (Supervisors)

Goal 2.2: Institute proactive and participative management practices. (High Priority)

Vision - Training of staff as they progress into management positions is very important. Employees recognize that having demonstrated ability in one setting does not guaranty a similar ability in another. Management is a combination of art and science. We advance people who show innate people management skills then teach them the system management tools they will need to round out their skill set.

Objective 1. By 06/05, develop a policy and training for supervisors, managers, and staff members to enhance a proactive and participative management environment. (Management team with HR)

Objective 2. By 1/03, be proactive in partnering with other Departments/Divisions to involve BSD at critical points in the planning and design of capital improvement, Economic Development and Redevelopment projects. (Management team)

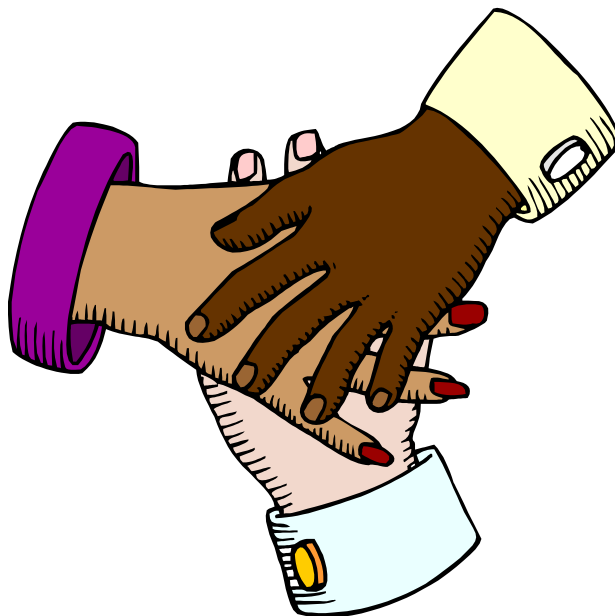
Objective 3. By 12/03, institute quarterly division-wide staff meetings. (Completed)

Key Result Area 2: Leadership

Goal 2.3: Achieve effective and open lines of communication at all levels. (Moderate Priority)

Vision - With the enhancement of horizontal interaction and the inherent strength of committee work together we will foster an environment of active and creative exchange of ideas in an atmosphere of safety. Inhibitions are reduced and participants feel the ability to speak forthrightly.

- Objective 1.** By 12/03, create a mechanism to ensure communication between Process Management teams resulting in workable and widely accepted improvements. (Process Management leaders)
- Objective 2.** By 9/04, implement work environment surveys of supervisors. (Supervisory group)
- Objective 3.** Conduct quarterly reviews; develop an "Open Door" environment in which staff members can openly discuss problems, issues, suggestions, recommendations, etc. without the fear of retribution or retaliation. (Management team)
- Objective 4.** By 4/04, institute a mechanism for conveying information to staff via a Division electronic bulletin board. (Lead – Ward Huffine & Technology team)
- Objective 5.** By 12/03, create a policy to invite upper management to periodically attend staff meetings. (Management team)



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Key Result Area 3: Processes & Procedures

Vision of The Future

Having written clear processes and work instructions available in a staff manual we now have a reference guide which acts as a first place check whenever a question arises. New and existing employees can utilize this as a way of self training which will assist them as they learn and become proficient in their new position. This manual has been effectively implemented and provides guidance for ongoing process improvement as well as the performance of the Process Improvement Teams.

Goal 3.1: Establish consistent Division-wide policies and procedures. (High Priority)

Vision - It has been essential that we have a comprehensive staff manual with consistent Division wide policies and procedures. The manual is used as a daily guide to answer questions, clarify issues and train new employees. It is at each desk and regular clients who wish to understand our operations have been known to obtain a copy. Work instructions have been developed for all our processes and help guide staff in their review work and with Tidemark. It is compliance here that provides the Division with the information it needs to report so completely.

- Objective 1.** By 1/05, provide and distribute written formal policies and procedures maintained in a comprehensive staff manual. (Management team)
- Objective 2.** By 12/03, establish and maintain standing committees for process and procedure evaluation that include all levels of staff. (Process Management team)
- Objective 3.** By 6/05, provide training for staff members on all job related tasks in the Process and Procedure Manual. (Supervisory team)
- Objective 4.** By 4/04, establish a database for technical code interpretations and code modifications. (Orion Goff)

Goal 3.2: Establish effective implementation of policies and procedures. (Moderate Priority)

Vision - Standards for creating and changing procedures are in place and create an orderly way to implement change and quality management adjustments as suggested by the committees. These changes are actively communicated to staff to insure a clear understanding and consistent adoption. Such changes are then monitored for effectiveness in place.

- Objective 1.** By 12/03, establish Division-wide standards for creating, revising, adopting and implementing changes to policies and procedures. (Process Management team)
- Objective 2.** By 4/04, establish a Division-wide policy for communicating process and procedure changes to staff and customers. (Technology team, MAs & Management team)
- Objective 3.** By 4/05, evaluate the effectiveness of the Process Management teams performance. (Strategic Planning team)

Key Result Area 4: Fiscal Planning & Management

Vision of The Future

Fiscal decision making has been integrated throughout the Division as decisions are made after in-depth analyses and within the context of the Strategic Plan. Staff routinely provides input into such decisions via teams and by solicitation of input from all quarters. To the extent possible from discretionary funds provision is made to accept staff initiated budget requests. Budget updates, including actual vs. projected expenditures and revenues are posted on the website. Building upon our status as a Restricted Revenue Fund, we have created criteria to measure the effectiveness of this construct and developed a process for operations as an Enterprise Fund.

Goal 4.1: Develop a new budget process to account for effective utilization of the Restricted Revenue Fund. (Moderate Priority)

Vision - The Restricted Revenue Funding idea has created a number of challenges for the Division. In order to understand its implications fully criteria and financial tools have been created to measure its effectiveness. The information gathered has assisted the Division in its reporting to Council and the Development Community and has provided the clout management has sometimes needed to pursue proposals not understood by Development Services but strongly supported by those communities. We are on our way to evolving into an Enterprise Fund.

Objective 1. By 6/04, develop a process for operating BSD as an “enterprise” using the restricted fund accounts. (Jeff Welker & Management team)

Objective 2. By 1/05, establish criteria and financial tools with which to measure the effectiveness of Restricted Revenue Fund mechanism. (Director & Finance group)

Goal 4.2: Base fiscal decisions on in-depth analysis tied to the Strategic Plan and involving staff input. (Moderate Priority)

Vision - The Strategic Plan is a living document that is routinely referred to and used. It is used as a benchmark against budget decisions to insure that a decision about one is not at the expense of the other. Budget teams review and make timely recommendations regarding budget development. A process is in place that seeks input about budget decisions from all quarters of the Division including, when possible, staff driven recommendations for discretionary spending totaling as much as 5 percent. A monthly budget summary is posted on the Internet for information.

Objective 1. By 3/04, create a staff representative team to participate in the budget process, with established goals and timelines. (Management team)

Objective 2. By 1/05, utilize this Strategic Plan to form the annual BSD budget. (Finance group with Management team)

Objective 3. By 1/05, develop and implement a process to include a staff determined portion of the proposed budget. (Management team)

Key Result Area 5: Code Enforcement & Administration

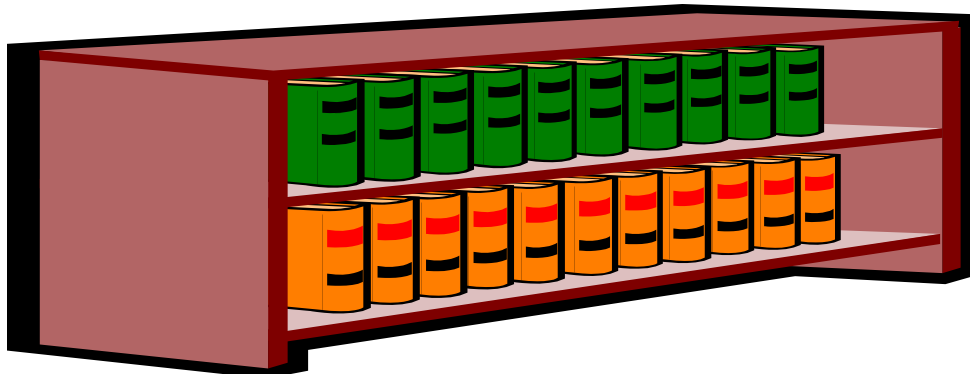
Vision of The Future

We have adopted a nationally recognized code with strong input from the Development community and regularly update it and our own amendments as appropriate. Along with these we have updated our Planning and Engineering Standards and Ordinances. We have in place a clearly defined appellate process for applicants to utilize, as they deem appropriate.

Goal 5.1: Recommend adoption of development related codes that are current and nationally recognized. (High Priority)

***Vision** - We have updated our administrative amendments, simplifying them and clarifying problems as they arise. We are committed to updating them as needed along with the other local codes and ordinances. Planning and Engineering standards are updated and the Building Codes will be updated in three-year intervals.*

- Objective 1.** By 4/04, develop a procedure to review and recommend revisions of Mesa Codes, ordinances and standards at least every three years. (Orion Goff with Administrative Code group)
- Objective 2.** By 4/04, complete the review and adoption of the International Building Code, Residential Code, Mechanical Code, Fuel-Gas Code, Existing Buildings Code, Accessibility Code and National Electrical Code. (Orion Goff with all code teams)
- Objective 3.** By 9/04, develop a new manual of City Public Works Development and Engineering Standards, coordinated with other City Divisions. (Jeff Welker with Development Engineering team)



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Key Result Area 6: Customer Relations & Partnerships

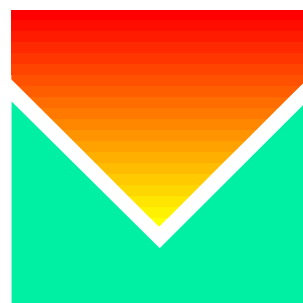
Vision of The Future

Through a variety of outlets, the Development Advisory Forum and a series of ongoing interactions with clients BSD has successfully marketed itself as a proactive, flexible, business minded operation. We are seen as service oriented in our willingness to find ways to help our clients successfully navigate our process. We have expanded our coordinator functions to provide a personal services element both in BSD and Planning even assisting with other departments as needed. We educate customers to explain our processes and the reasons we have them and we are open to new ways of accomplishing our part in their process.

Goal 6.1: Promote BSD as a valuable development resource. (Moderate Priority)

Vision - BSD wears two hats: we are a regulatory agency and we are a business resource for the development community. This reality has been difficult for some to accept but we are committed to it and this duality underlies all that we do. We promote ourselves as such a resource, working with the community to solve problems, derive solutions and assist them in a successful progression through our process. We believe that we are a means to the end rather than the end and we know, as our clients do, that the end is a built project that is occupied and providing revenue to our city. This is threaded within our marketing approach and ingrained into our operations, even in our logo and slogan.

- Objective 1.** By 6/04₁ develop a marketing program to improve and promote the positive image of BSD as being proactive and open minded. (Ward Huffine & Heather Gray)
- Objective 2.** By 4/04₁ review, update and inform customers of existing policies and procedures for appeals including: Building, Fire, Development Engineering (Civil), and Inspections. (Code, Management & Technology teams)
- Objective 3.** By 12/03₁ establish a mechanism to conduct customer and staff focus groups to determine BSD challenges and successes. (Management team - completed)



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Key Result Area 6: Customer Relations Partnerships

Goal 6.2: Provide improved customer access to BSD services. (Moderate Priority)

Vision - We have focused upon customer access to our services and provide a number of options including twice a day inspections, Saturday inspections, increased access through our telephone system and our database status access. These are reinforced by focus groups that are held regularly with the community.

Objective 1. By 4/04, survey the development community for current and desired BSD services. (Ward Huffine & Communications group)

Objective 2. By 2/04, develop a customer interaction program to facilitate staff response to customer inquiries within 24 hours of receipt. (Supervisory group)

Objective 3. By 6/04, implement feasible survey recommendations. (Management team)

Goal 6.3: Educate customers on methods for achieving a successful development process. (Moderate Priority)

Vision - Through such focus groups we have determined that training and information services to our clients must be an on going endeavor. We have had great participation in our on line workshops, seminars in the Developer's Forum and outreach presentations to professional associations. With guides to our clients on subjects as diverse as our morning review time to their own quality control checks, we seek to educate them as much as possible, not to convenience ourselves but to make their interaction with us as successful as possible.

Objective 1. By 1/06, all employees shall have completed training in successful communication skills. (Steve Hether with MAS)

Objective 2. By 12/04, provide guidelines and educational materials on navigating the BSD portion of the development process. (Orion Goff with Development Coordination group & Ward Huffine with Communications group)



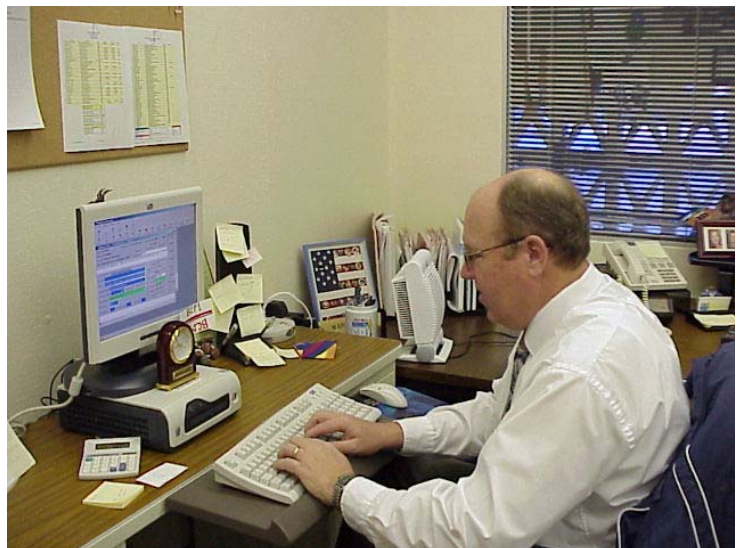
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Key Result Area 7: Technology & Facilities

Vision of The Future

Firmly committed to technology, the Division makes virtually all project information available to customers and staff. The increased information accessibility has improved communication, decreased misunderstandings and reduced frustration about getting timely answers to client queries. Armed with accurate up-to-date information, clients now discuss project status with staff in an informed professional way. Able to obtain information in minutes allows staff to answer questions accurately. Supervisors are able to manage workflow in a coordinated informed way with access to project status that is shared by all work units. Management is able to gain meaningful measurements of our processes and to report them to our stakeholders and customers regularly and fully masking our operations transparent and removing the sense that we are an impenetrable bureaucracy that customers are at the mercy of when they enter our doors. Taken together the various applications that Tidemark affords the Division have allowed us to dramatically improve our customer service, understand our business and increase our communication levels within our organization and to the community we serve.



Goal 7.1: Automate processes to make information conveniently accessible to staff and customers. (High Priority)

Vision - *In order to be able to utilize technology completely, we are now able to include in Tidemark every activity associated with a particular parcel number or address. We have real time access to information and we train staff to fully use the system.*

Objective 1. By 5/04, establish procedures to include all BSD development information within Tidemark. (Process Management team leaders)

Objective 2. By 1/07, survey staff to evaluate automation effectiveness. (Ward Huffine with Technology team)

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Key Result Area 7: Technology & Facilities

Goal 7.2: Develop facilities and adopt technology that result in effective customer service and work flow. (Moderate Priority)

Vision

We have taken many steps toward adapting our processes toward effective customer service and increased workflow. We have a new phone system that facilitates incoming calls, reduces waiting time and prompts callers to respond to their needs. We have a call center that directs calls to the appropriate source and screens out unrelated calls and we are able to reach one another anywhere in the Division without leaving our area. With Tidemark now fully operational we make available to ourselves and our clients all information associated with an address or parcel number including Right of Way permits. Our approach to technology upgrades now is to identify them early and provide a great deal of training up to several months ahead of roll out whenever possible. Extending this further we have added Planning and Engineering Inspections to Tidemark. Our facilities needs are always evolving as well. We now have multiple satellite offices and have renovated our main office after a space needs assessment program was undertaken.

Objective 1. By 4/04, create a procedure for identifying and investigating new technologies to enhance customer service. (Ward Huffine and Technology team)

Objective 2. By 9/04, create a three-year plan to evaluate satellite offices as needed for improved customer convenience. (Director & Management team)

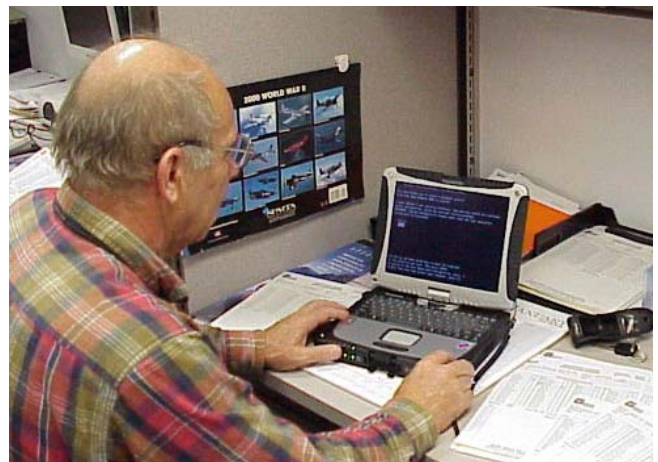
Objective 3. By 3/04, complete a space needs program to determine the space that is needed for the current and future positions. (Lead - David Harding with Management team)

Goal 7.3: Provide communication systems that improve customer service. (Moderate Priority)

Vision - We have improved communications toward better customer service by upgrading the phone system, promoting E-mail, maximizing face-to-face meetings with clients and activating an intercom system.

Objective 1. By 8/04, implement a call center to facilitate improved BSD's telephone customer service. (Jeff Welker & Management team)

Objective 2. By 8/04, install a new telecommunication system. (Ward Huffine with Management team)



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